

MIRACULOUS REDEMPTION: AN ALLUSION TO PSALM
107 FOUND IN MARK 4:35-6:44

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Introduction

In 1978, Robert A. Guelich edited a book of collected essays in honor of George E. Ladd titled *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology*. Robert Meye was one of the contributors to this volume with an essay titled "Psalm 107 as 'Horizon' for Interpreting the Miracle Stories of Mark 4:35-8:26."¹ In his essay, Meye contends that Psalm 107 should be understood as the interpretive "horizon" that Mark used to compose the miracle stories found in Mark 4:35-8:26.² Meye defines the term "horizon" as "that which was, consciously or unconsciously, in the author's intention." He concludes his thoughtful essay with the following reflection about the connection between these two passages:

Even though Markan commentators over many decades have sporadically taken note of parallels between elements in Mark and Psalm 107, most of the harvest has remained standing in the field. Almost certainly, much remains to be gleaned, if not harvested.³

In this paper, I take up the intertextual sickle that has been laid forth by Meye as I attempt to reap the bountiful interpretive harvest that comes from reading the Markan miracle accounts in light of Psalm 107. I propose that Mark has intentionally juxtaposed and styled the four miracle accounts found in Mark 4:35-6:42 in such a way so as to forge a fast, recognizable allusion between these four miracle accounts and the four redemption accounts in Psalm 107 in order to communicate specific theological truths. I seek to substantiate this claim by first looking at Psalm 107 in its context, and then by comparing the four redemption accounts in Psalm 107 to

¹Robert Meye, "Psalm 107 as 'Horizon' for Interpreting the Miracle Stories of Mark 4:35-8:26," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology*, ed. Robert Guelich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 1-13.

²Ibid., 1.

³Ibid., 13.

the four miracle accounts in Mark 4:35-6:42. Anticipating that there may be objections, I then focus on answering possible criticisms against the existence of an allusion to Psalm 107 in Mark 4:35-6:42 by making use of Richard Hays' seven criteria that test the presence of NT allusions to the OT. Next, I weigh the thesis against the structure of Mark to see if the thesis holds as I widen the lens to include all of the miracle accounts recorded in Mark 4:35-8:26. Finally, I address potential theological implications and benefits if the thesis indeed holds true, concluding with some closing thoughts.

Psalm 107 in Context

Influenced by the previous works of Brevard Childs and J.L. Mays, John Walton suggests in an essay titled "Psalms: A Cantata About the Davidic Covenant" that the Psalter is organized around a comprehensive narrative structure that poetically recapitulates Israel's redemptive history from the rise of the Davidic line all the way through to the exile and the return to the land.⁴ A summary of the narrative structure of the psalms illumines the function of Psalm 107 in the rehearsal of Israel's redemptive history.

After entering through the introductory gateway to the Psalter (Pss 1-2), the reader encounters a struggling David whose promised reign is not yet fully inaugurated in Book I.⁵ Book II sings of the establishment of the throne of David and of the covenant promises that are fulfilled by his enthronement; but in Book III the failures of the Davidic line are on display as the psalms lament their way through the disobedience and subsequent exile of the king and his people, just as the prophet Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 28-30. But, as in Deuteronomy 28-30, the hope of a return from exile is alive and well as it is rehearsed and re-rehearsed in Book IV. Finally, in Book V, the reader comes face-to-face with the fulfillment of this hope as

⁴John H. Walton, "Psalms : a cantata about the Davidic covenant," *Journal Of The Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991), 21-31.

⁵The idea of Psalms 1 and 2 being a interpretive gateway comes from R.L. Cole. Robert Luther Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013).

the return from exile is realized.⁶ Psalm 107 stands at the head of Book V, a book that has elsewhere been aptly titled "The Psalms of the Return."⁷

Psalm 107 opens with the psalmist praising the LORD. "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love יִסְדֹּק endures forever" (Ps 107:1). This is a mantra that is repeated throughout the Psalm four other times (Ps 107:8, 15, 21, 31); and it is revisited again at the close (Ps 107:43). The psalmist is encouraging the people to lift up praise and thanksgiving to the LORD because they have been the benefactors of his חַסְדֹּם. Surprisingly, this חַסְדֹּם has not been explicitly directed toward God's covenant people, but more broadly toward the children of man אֲדָמָה לְבָנֵי (Ps 107:8, 15, 21, 31). The חַסְדֹּם that the LORD has shown to the children of man is the act of redeeming them from trouble (Ps 107:2). The redemption of the people is presented as already having taken place; the steadfast love has already been extended and received.⁸

There are four groups of people in Psalm 107 who have been redeemed by the LORD.⁹ They have been "gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south (sea?)" (Ps 107:3).¹⁰ Some "wandered in desert wastes," but these were fed and satisfied (Ps 107:4-9). Some "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death" in "affliction and irons," but these were delivered out of their bonds (107:10-16). Some "drew near to the gates of death," but these were healed (107:17-22). And some "went down to the sea in ships" and were

⁶For further reflection on a narrative structure to the Psalter, see James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 276-279.

⁷This the title Goulder gives to Book V. Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107-150)* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

⁸The verbs in this Psalm are all perfect-tense indicating stative events that have already occurred.

⁹All English quotations are from the ESV.

¹⁰For a stimulating discussion on the textual difficulty with the word אֲדָמָה in Psalm 107:3, see Jarick, John. "The Four Corners of Psalm 107." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (April 1, 1997), 270-287. Jarick convincingly argues that most translations get it wrong when they translate אֲדָמָה "south." It is clearly the word for "sea" in Hebrew, and if it is translated "sea" then it parallels nicely with the last group of people who are redeemed from the "sea" in Psalm 107.

caught in a violent storm, but these were rescued from the throes of the sea (107:23-32). Are these people the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon? Are these people representative of individuals who have been brought back to dwell in the land? Or are these stories to be read as paradigmatic for a future return from exile?¹¹ These are questions that the reader must wrestle with when he encounters Psalm 107 in the context of Book V and the rest of the Psalter.

Intertextual Connectivity Between Psalm 107 and Mark 4:35-6:42

By examining each of the redeemed people groups in Psalm 107 in the order they appear in the psalm in comparison to a corresponding miracle event in Mark 4:35-6:42, I hope to show a strong verbal and thematic correspondence between these two passages and thus gain an interpretive clue to the previously raised questions about who the redeemed are in Psalm 107. In his gospel, Mark has set four miracle accounts adjacent to one another, each of which tells the story of Jesus redeeming a certain group of people from a certain affliction (Mark 4:35-6:42).

In this section, I set out to demonstrate that Mark has intentionally bundled these four miracle events together to evoke the new exodus and return from exile themes that are present at the beginning of Book V of the Psalter by making a strong allusion to Psalm 107, the Psalm that opens Book V. In each of the four miracle events in Mark 4:35-6:42, there are both strong verbal

¹¹For a helpful summary of how this passage has been interpreted in the past, see M. D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107-150): Studies in the Psalter, IV* (Sheffield, Eng: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 119. The following is a summary of the traditional rabbinic interpretation of Psalm 107 from Avrohom Chaim Feuer, *Sefer Tehilim = Tehillim : a New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources* (New York: Mesorah Publications, 1977), 1303. "Alshich says that the Psalmist is amplifying the thanks which Israel offered to God when they were redeemed from the dangers of Egyptian bondage, where they were threatened by the hazards of both the scorched wilderness and the deep sea. Ibn Yachya relates the work to David's life. The Philistines captures the Holy Ark, and it was endangered in countless ways. When David returned the Ark to a haven of safety and sanctity, he composed this hymn of thanks. Sforino says that the Psalmist echoes those who will be redeemed from the present exile. Throughout the centuries they have endured all kinds of danger, only to be ultimately confronted with the greatest danger of all - the war of Gog and Magog, which will threaten to tear the entire world asunder. The Talmud derives a practical rule of Jewish conduct from this psalm: Four people must offer thanks to God - he who traveled over the sea; he who journeyed through the desert; he who was sick and then healed; and he who was jailed and then released. All four of these perilous situations are vividly described in this psalm."

and thematic parallels to Psalm 107 that connect each miracle event to a respective redeemed people group in Psalm 107.

Hungry in the Desert: Psalm 107:4-9 and Mark 6:33-44

The first group of people who have been redeemed by the LORD in Psalm 107 are those who wandered in desert wastes ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (Ps 107:4).¹² They are hungry and thirsty to the point of fainting (107:5), so they cry out to the LORD (107:6) and he delivers them by leading them to a city πόλιν (107:7). It is presumed that they are fed, for in the end they are satisfied ἐχόρτασεν and no longer hunger or thirst (107:9).

Jesus' miracle of the feeding of five-thousand is recorded in Mark 6:33-44. In this narrative, a group of people leave the cities πολλοὶ (6:33) and follow Jesus into the desert ἔρημός (6:35). After a long period of teaching, the people are hungry (6:33-37). The disciples come to Jesus so that he might solve the problem of the people's hunger (6:35-36), and Jesus feeds the people (6:41-44). They all eat and are satisfied ἐχορτάσθησαν (6:42).

There are three verbal parallels between Psalm 107:4-9 and Mark 6:33-44: (1) city πόλιν, (2) desert ἔρημός, and (3) satisfaction χορτάω.¹³ Beyond these verbal parallels, which may initially seem insignificant since they all are common words, the thematic parallel of hunger and hunger satiated is shared in common between Psalm 107:4-9 and Mark 6:33-44. In both passages, the hunger of the people is satisfied by the divine Hand: in Psalm 107 the people are led by the LORD and are fed, in Mark 6 the people are fed by Jesus with bread that has been miraculously multiplied.

¹²I have used the text of the LXX for the Greek translation of Psalm 107 to demonstrate the verbal parallels in Mark's gospel. All references, however, are according to the English numbering scheme and not the MT-LXX numbering. Psalm 107 is actually number 106 in the LXX and MT.

¹³In the following analysis, I use the term *verbal parallel* to refer to words that are identical or derive from the same verbal root (such as the nounal and verbal form of the same root). I use the term *thematic parallel* to refer to words that share a similar semantic range or connote the same ideas but do not share a common root or etymology.

Captive Dwellers of Darkness: Psalm 107:10-16 and Mark 5:1-20

There is a second group of people who have been redeemed by the LORD in Psalm 107:10-16. These have "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death" (107:10). They have rebelled against God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High τοῦ ὑψίστου (107:11). Therefore, they are subdued with hard labor and are bent low to the point of falling down, shackled πεπεδημένους by chains (107:10,12). In their distress, they cry out ἐκέκραξαν to the LORD (107:13), and he bursts their bonds δεσμούς (107:14). These marvelous wonders τὰ θαυμάσια are to be praised (107:15), for no longer are the people captives; the prisoners have been set free (107:16). The LORD has shown them mercy ἐλέη (107:15)

The exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac is recorded in Mark 5:1-20. The Gerasene demoniac lives "among the tombs" and is possessed by an "unclean spirit" (5:2-3). He has been bound δεδῆσθαι with shackles πέδαις before, but these shackles could not hold him, for his strength was too great (5:3-4). He is bent low and enslaved by his own insanity (5:5). When Jesus meets him, the distressed demoniac falls down and cries out κράξας to Jesus saying, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High (τοῦ ὑψίστου) God?" (5:6). Jesus promptly casts out the demon whose name is Legion, for there are many, and the demons enter into a herd of pigs who throw themselves into the sea (5:9-13). Crowds find out from the liberated demoniac about the miracle and the people marvel ἐθαύμαζον (5:20). Jesus tells the man to go home and report the great mercy ἡλέησέν that has been shown him (5:19)

There are six verbal parallels between Psalm 107:10-16 and Mark 5:1-20: (1) bonding/bonds δέω/δεσμός, (2) shackling/shackles πεδάω/πέδη, (3) crying out κράζω, (4) marveling/marvels θαυμάζω/θαυμάσιος, (5) mercy ἐλέη/ἡλέησέν, and (6) the name Most High used in reference to the LORD τοῦ ὑψίστου. This final verbal parallel is very significant because this is the only place in Mark's gospel where the LORD is referred to as the Most High.¹⁴ There are other

¹⁴τοῦ ὑψίστου only occurs in the New Testament 13 times. Of these 13 times, it is used as a name for God 9 times, the majority of which occur in Luke's Gospel (Mk 5:7; Lk 1:32, 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17; Heb 7:1).

thematic parallels between these passages beyond these verbal parallels that Mark may have intended. The redeemed in Psalm 107:10-16 were dwelling in "darkness and in the shadow of death" and the demoniac in Mark 5:1-20 was dwelling amongst the tombs (amongst death?). The redeemed in Psalm 107:10-16 were physically imprisoned, whereas the demoniac was spiritually imprisoned, and in the end both are set free; both are brought "out of darkness and the shadow of death" (Ps 107:14). It is commonly suggested that demon possession is a sort of spiritual bondage from which one must be released, a theme that is picked up by Mark by alluding to Psalm 107 in this passage.¹⁵

Afflicted by Sickness and Death: Psalm 107:17-22 and Mark 5:21-43

A third group of people who have been redeemed by the LORD is told of in Psalm 107:17-22. This group has drawn "near to the gates of death θανάτου" (107:18) and because of their sins they suffer affliction θλίβεσθαι (107:17), loathing any kind of food (107:18). In their distress, they cry out to the LORD, and he saves ἔσωσεν them from their sickness and heals ἰάσατο them by his word (107:20).

The healing of Jairus's daughter and a woman with a flow of blood is recorded in Mark 5:21-43. A man named Jairus approaches Jesus, who is in a crowd, and implores him to come lay hands on his daughter who is "at the point of death" so that she might be saved σωθῆ from death and live (Mk 5:23). Jesus agrees to go with Jairus, and the crowd "throng[s]" συνέθλιβον about him (5:24). On the way to Jairus' house, Jesus is touched by a woman who is seeking to be saved σωθήσομαι from a chronic illness she has suffered for years (5:28). When she touches Jesus, she is healed ἴαται immediately (5:29). Jesus turns to her and tells her that it is

¹⁵William Lane, in his commentary on Mark, speaks of Satan as the strong man "whose strength is evidenced in the enslavement of men through sin, possession, disease and death." And Jesus has come to "release the enslaved." William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 143. Spiritual bondage might be understood in this passage in the rabbinical tradition also. "The Talmud states that one of the seven Scriptural names for hell is the shadow of death." Feuer, *Sefer Tehilim = Tehillim*, 1306.

her faith that has saved σέσωκέν her and made her well (5:34). When Jesus finally arrives at Jairus' house, it is reported that Jairus' daughter is dead ἀπέθανεν (5:35). However, Jesus declares that the child is not dead ἀπέθανεν, but only sleeping (5:36, 39). Jesus goes in to see the child who has been presumed dead, and he speaks to her to get up, and she gets up and she is given food to eat (5:41-43).

There are three clear verbal parallels and one possible verbal parallel between Psalm 107:17-22 and Mark 5:21-35: (1) death/dying θανάτος/ἀποθνήσκω, (2) saving σῶζω, (3) healing ἰάομαι, and possibly (4) suffering/thronging θλίβω/συνθλίβω. In addition to these verbal parallels, there are several thematic parallels between these two passages. In both passages it is a spoken word that precipitates the healing event (cf. Ps 107:20 and Mk 5:41). In Psalm 107:17-20, the people are sick to the point of loathing food (Ps 107:18), whereas in Mark 5:21-43, once the daughter is healed, she is given something to eat immediately (Mk 5:43). In Psalm 107:17-20, the people have drawn near to the gates of death, and in Mark 4:21-43, the little girl has gone through the gates of death; and in both situations the people are given healing and salvation.

In Boats Battered by Storm: Psalm 107:23-32 and Mark 4:35-41

The final group of people redeemed by the LORD in Psalm 107 is told of in Psalm 107:23-32. This is the lengthiest account and perhaps the most startlingly parallel to what is found in Mark. This group has gone down to the sea θάλασσαν and are in boats πλοίοις on the water to do their work (Ps 107:23). While they are out to sea, the LORD commands the stormy winds to stir the sea into great waves κύματα (107:25). Their courage is melted away and they are at their wits' end (107:26) as they are tossed to and fro by the sea and the waves (107:27). Admired their distress, they cry out the LORD for deliverance (107:28). He hears their cry and delivers them by quieting the wind and the waves (107:29). The storm is calm and the people are glad (107:30).

The account of Jesus calming a storm is recorded in Mark 4:35-41. Jesus and his followers get into a boat πλοίῳ to cross over to the other side of the sea θαλάσση (Mk 4:35, 39, 41). Other boats πλοῖα are with them (4:36). While they are out to sea, a great wind stirs up the

sea into waves τὰ κύματα, which start to come into the boat (4:37). The disciples are afraid (4:40) so they wake Jesus, who is asleep, and cry out to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (4:38). Jesus awakes and rebukes the wind and the waves by saying "Peace, Be still!" (4:39), and the sea obeys and is calm. The disciples marvel and are afraid (4:41).

Three clear verbal parallels exist between Psalm 107:23-32 and Mark 4:35-41: (1) sea θάλασσα, (2) boats πλοῖος, and (3) waves κύματα. Beyond these verbal parallels, there are several thematic parallels that bind these passages together. Many commentators have noticed these parallels and have acknowledged the similarities between Mark 4:35-41 and Psalm 107:23-32.¹⁶ Adela Yarbro Collins even suggests a basis for Markan dependency on Psalm 107 from the mention of "other boats" in Mark 4:36, which is probably inspired by Psalm 107:23a, "those who go down to the sea in boats."¹⁷ In both passages, a great wind stirs up the sea, which results in danger for the passengers of the boats. In both passages, the passengers are greatly afraid. In both passages, a divine Voice hushes the wind and the waves, which respond and are quieted, and in both passages the passengers are brought safely to their destinations (cf. Ps 107:30 and Mk 5:1).

¹⁶James Brooks, R.T. France, and Adela Yarbro Collins all point of the intertextual connection between Psalm 107:23-32 and Mark 4:35-41 in their commentaries on Mark. James A. Brooks, *Mark*, NAC, vol. 23 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman Press, 1991); R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. NIGTC, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002); Adela Y Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, vol. 38 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). Timothy Geddert has closely examined Mark's use of Psalms and also recognizes this allusion, but he fails to recognize the other allusions to the three other redemption accounts in Psalm 107. "Why do I suggest that Psalm 107 might be in Mark's mind as he narrates the story of the storm? Because he describes the outcome just as the psalmist had. The disciples wake Jesus in panic and then they experience the great miracle. Mark writes, 'Then the wind died down and it was completely calm' (4:39). The psalmist had written: 'Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed' (107:28,29). Jesus did for them what only God can do, muzzle the wind and calm the angry sea." Timothy J. Geddert, "The use of Psalms in Mark." *Baptistic Theologies* 1, no. 2 (September 1, 2009), 122.

¹⁷Collins and Attridge, *Mark*, 258.

Fourfold Witness Establishing the Credible Presence of an Allusion

All of the verbal and thematic parallels in Mark 4:35-6:44 and Psalm 107 are organized succinctly in the table below.

Table 1: Verbal and Thematic Parallels between Psalm 107 and Mark 4:35-6:44		
Hungry in the Desert		
	Psalm 107:4-9	Mark 6:33-44
Verbal Parallels		
desert	ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (107:4)	ἐρημός (6:35)
city	πόλιν (107:7)	πολλοὶ (6:33)
satisfaction	ἐχόρτασεν (107:9)	ἐχορτάσθησαν (6:42)
Thematic Parallels		
hunger	(107:5)	(6:35-36)
hunger satiated	(107:9)	(6:42)
Captive Dwellers of Darkness		
	Psalm 107:10-16	Mark 5:1-20
Verbal Parallels		
Most High	τοῦ ὑψίστου (107:11)	τοῦ ὑψίστου (5:6)
shackling	πεπεδημένους (107:10, 12)	πέδαις (5:4)
binding	δεσμούς (107:14)	δεδέσθαι (5:4)
crying out	ἐκέκραξαν (107:13)	κράξας (5:6)
marveling	θαυμάσια (107:15)	ἐθαύμαζον (5:20)
mercy	ἐλέη (107:15)	ἠλέησέν (5:19)
Thematic Parallels		
dwelling in darkness	darkness, shadow of death (107:10)	tombs (5:2-3)
imprisonment	physical (107:10, 14, 16)	spiritual (5:2, 15)
Afflicted by Sickness and Death		
	Psalm 107:17-22	Mark 5:21-43
Verbal Parallels		
death	θανάτου (107:18)	ἀπέθανεν (5:35, 39)
salvation	ἔσωσεν (107:20)	σωθῇ (5:23) σέσωκέν (5:34)
healing	ἰάσατο (107:20)	ἴαται (5:29)
[suffering/thronging]	θλίβεσθαι (107:17)	συνέθλιβον (5:24)
Thematic Parallels		
healing word[s]	(107:20)	(5:41)
near death/dead	(107:18)	near death, dead (5:23, 35)
illness	suffering affliction (107:17)	flow of blood (5:26)

In Boats Battered by Storm		
	Psalm 107:23-32	Mark 4:35-41
Verbal Parallels		
sea	θάλασσαν (107:23)	θαλάσση (4:39)
boats	πλοίοις (107:23)	πλοίῳ, πλοῖα (4:36)
waves	κύματα (107:25)	κύματα (4:37)
Thematic Parallels		
several boats	(107:23)	(4:36)
great wind/storm	πνευμα (107:25)	ανεμος (4:37)
calamity/distress	melted courage (107:26)	fear (4:40)
quieted waters	(107:29)	(4:39)

Taken individually, the four miracle accounts recorded in Mark 4:35-6:42 each demonstrate a possible intertextual allusion to Psalm 107 through both verbal and thematic parallels. Taken collectively, this four-pearl string of miracle accounts demonstrates remarkable parallelism to the four gems found in Psalm 107 as verbal parallel is stacked upon verbal parallel and is adorned by thematic parallels woven throughout. This can especially be seen if one examines all of the evidence at once in the same light.

In short, if this data supports an intertextual connection between Psalm 107 and Mark 4:35-6:42, and a certain, conscious allusion to Psalm 107 by Mark has been adequately established, then there are several implications that must be explored regarding Mark and his theology, especially with consideration to what Mark seeks to communicate about the person and work of Jesus through this allusion. Before this can be considered, however, I first turn to answer a few anticipated objections.

Anticipated Objections

As with any significant claim that has not been widely accepted in the theological community, there are several potential objections that I anticipate some might have to the proposal that Mark intentionally alludes to Psalm 107 when narrating a portion of Jesus' miracle accounts in order to communicate intentional theological truths. The two potential objections I hope to answer are as follows: (I) The verbal and thematic parallels cited are not substantial

enough to warrant the presence of an intertextual allusion between Mark 4:35-6:44 and Psalm 107. (II) The structure and placement of the miracle section in Mark 4:35-8:26 does not fit into the wider structure of Mark and therefore the thesis is meaningless.

(I) The verbal and thematic parallels cited in favor of an intertextual allusion are not convincing.

G. K. Beale, in his book *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, gives the following "telltale key" to determining whether or not an Old Testament allusion is present in the New Testament text: for an allusion to be certainly present, there must be an "incomparable or unique parallel in wording, syntax, concept, or cluster of motifs in the same order or structure."¹⁸

To aid in the process of discerning the presence of an allusion, Beale suggests the following seven criteria originally created by Richard Hays: (1) Availability, (2) Volume, (3) Recurrence, (4) Thematic Coherence, (5) Historical Plausibility, (6) History of Interpretation, and (7) Satisfaction.¹⁹ I will use these seven criteria to test the allusion in Mark 4:35-6:44 to Psalm 107.

(1) The criterion of Availability tests whether or not the text alluded to would have been available to the author. In this case, Psalm 107[106] in the LXX was certainly available to Mark the evangelist. This first criterion is obviously satisfied, as it is commonly accepted that the Septuagint was in use before the writing of the Gospel of Mark, no matter when Mark penned his gospel.

(2) Volume refers to the "degree of verbatim repetition of words or syntactical patterns." Beale notes that some exegetes require a unique combination of at least three words to provide an allusion, a restraint that he does not follow himself. It is significant enough to note

¹⁸G.K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 31.

¹⁹Ibid., 33.

that each of the four miracle accounts of Mark cited above contains at least three verbal parallels. When all of these verbal parallels are added together, the volume criterion is sufficiently satisfied.

(3) The criterion of Recurrence requires there to be "references in the immediate context (or elsewhere by the same author) to the same OT context from which the purported allusion derives."²⁰ Mark frequently quotes from and alludes to the Psalter in his gospel especially favoring quotations from Book V, the book which our psalm opens. In fact, only one out of the five psalms quotations comes from outside of Book V.²¹ Mark quotes from both Psalm 110 (Mk 12:36; 14:62) and Psalm 118 (Mk 11:9, 10; 12:10, 11), and he may even allude to the Hallel Psalms of Book V.²² The recurrence of Book V in Mark strengthens the case for the suggested allusion and satisfies the criterion.

(4) The Thematic Coherence criterion demands that the allusion be thematically suitable and satisfying in both the OT and NT texts, and the allusion must fit and illuminate the authors' arguments. I will take up this criterion in more detail below, but for now it is sufficient to say that Psalm 107 and the Gospel of Mark act as structural-theological hinges whose significance cannot be overstated. Psalm 107, in a narrative reading of the Psalter, stands at the beginning of Book V, which is the book that foretells of the fulfillment of the promised return from exile for the people of Yahweh. Likewise, the Gospel of Mark recounts the story of the One who has initiated the promised return from exile.. An allusion to Psalm 107 would illuminate the message Mark is seeking to communicate throughout his gospel: namely that Jesus is the promised Messiah foretold of in the OT Scriptures who has come to end the (spiritual) exile.

The last three criteria, according to Beale, are "less reliable guides to validating

²⁰Ibid., 33.

²¹J. Samuel Subramanian seems to miss a fifth quotation from the Psalter in Mark 14:62, as he only counts four (11:9-10; 12:10-11; 12:36; 15:34). J.S. Subramanian, *The Synoptic Gospels and the Psalms As Prophecy* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 126-127.

²²Meye argues that when Jesus sang with the disciples after dinner in Mark 14:26, they probably were singing the Hallel Psalms (Pss 115ff). Meye, "Psalm 107 as 'Horizon'", 6.

allusions."²³ Nevertheless, all three criteria are sufficiently met in the case of our allusion to Psalm 107 in Mark 4:35-6:44.

(5) Historical plausibility refers to the likelihood that the NT writer, in our case Mark, could have intended the proposed allusion, and that the audience could have understood the allusion. Erich Zenger suggests that Book V of the psalter played a special role in post-exilic Judaism. "The fifth book of psalms has a strong liturgical character due to its basic hymnlike structure" and therefore "one cannot help but submit the thesis that particularly the fifth book of Psalms is post-cultic and meant to be recited/meditated upon as a 'spiritual pilgrimage' to Zion which is the seat of the universal king YHWH and of the God of Sinai who teaches his Torah from Zion."²⁴ It is reasonable to assume, due to the structure and organization of the Psalter, that the memorization of psalms was widespread, and therefore shaped the theological constructions of Second Temple Jews.²⁵ Therefore, both Mark and his audience would have been very familiar with Psalm 107, even possibly through memorization. They may have even anticipated the coming of the Messiah with the categories of Psalm 107 in mind as we shall explore below.

(6) The History of Interpretation criterion, according to Beale, is the "least reliable criteria."²⁶ As was previously mentioned, many commentators have noted the connection between Mark 4:35-41 and Psalm 107:23-32. Apart from Meye, however, in my research I have not run across anyone else who argues for a direct connection between the four miracle accounts in Mark and the four redemption accounts of Psalm 107.²⁷ This criterion provides the weakest

²³Ibid., 35.

²⁴Erich Zenger, . "The Composition and Theology of the Fifth Book of Psalms, Psalms 107-145." *Journal For The Study Of The Old Testament* no. 80 (1998), 77-102.

²⁵This is the argument that Gordon Wenham makes in chapter 1 of his book *The Psalter Reclaimed*. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Psalter Reclaimed: Praying and Praising with the Psalms* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 1.

²⁶Beale, *Handbook*, 33.

²⁷In their Hermeneia commentary on the psalms, Hossfeld and Zenger do recognize a possible allusion in Mark to Psalm 107 in the healing of the demon-possessed man (Mk 5:1-20) and the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:21-43). Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger,

support for an allusion, but at least for Beale this should not be conclusive.

(7) Satisfaction, the final criterion, is very similar to Thematic Coherence [see (4) above]. Satisfaction simply measures how illuminated the NT passage becomes once the allusion is recognized. I will argue below that Mark's overall structure becomes more visible when the Psalm 107 lamp is placed firmly in the exegete's hand.

When the proposed allusion in Mark 4:35-6:44 to Psalm 107 has been tested against all seven of Hays' criteria as set forth by Beale, the results point in favor of the credible presence of an allusion. Let us turn then to the second anticipated objection.

(II) The structure and placement of the miracle accounts in Mark do not support the thesis.

I have two points of anticipated objection in mind in this section. First, it must be noted that the four miracle accounts in Mark 4:35-6:44 are not directly adjacent to one another. The first three miracle accounts are directly adjacent to one another (Mk 4:35-41; 5:1-20; 5:21-43) but these are separated from the last miracle account (Mk 6:33-44) by three related narratives (Mk 6:1-6, 7-13, 14-32). Second, there are other miracle accounts that are structurally and thematically connected to these four miracle accounts that need to be explained in light of the allusion to Psalm 107.

The Problem of the Disruptive Narrative Passage: Mark 6:1-32

Is it justifiable to maintain that the four miracle accounts in Mark 4:35-6:44 should be held together in an allusion to Psalm 107, even though there is an interrupting narrative passage in separating the first three from the last? Although the four miracle accounts are interrupted by a three-part narrative passage (Mk 6:1-32), it can be argued that the interpretation of these narrative passages is aided by the recognition of an allusion to Psalm 107. The intervening narrative section that separates the first three miracle accounts from the last one is found in Mark

Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 111.

6:1-32. In this section, Jesus goes to his hometown, Nazareth, and is essentially rejected (Mk 6:1-6); Jesus then sends out the twelve disciples with authority to preach and perform miracles (Mk 6:7-13); and John the Baptist is imprisoned and beheaded by King Herod (Mk 6:14-32). It would seem logical that if Mark intends to allude to Psalm 107 in the surrounding miracle accounts of Mark 4:34-6:44, then the interrupting narratives should be able to be interpreted in light of the allusion. Much more work could be done with respect to the first two passages in this section (Mk 6:1-6; 7-13), but for this argument, I will only focus on the third narrative, the imprisonment and beheading of John the Baptist, and its relation to the Psalm 107 allusion.

R.T. France calls Mark 6:14-32 a digression, as it has "no overt link with Jesus or his disciples."²⁸ Conversely, I suggest that Mark 6:14-32 is not a digression but a foil for interpreting the allusion to Psalm 107 in light of the miracles that Jesus has performed. In Psalm 107:10-16, the LORD redeems those who have been bound δεσμούς (Ps 107:14) in prison and sets them free. In Mark 6:14-32, John the Baptist is bound δεδέσθαι and put in prison (Mk 6:17). But John the Baptist is not set free as one might assume from the allusion to Psalm 107 in the surrounding passages. Instead, he is beheaded (Mk 6:27). Perhaps, by sandwiching this narrative in between the miracles that allude to Psalm 107, Mark is guiding the reader to understand that Jesus fulfills Psalm 107:10-16 not by loosing the physical bonds of prisoners but by loosing the spiritual bonds of the spiritually oppressed, as he did in the case of the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:1-20). This is one suggestion that could explain the positioning of this pericope in Mark's overall structure. However, there is another significant reason to maintain the bundling of these four miracle accounts together, even in spite of the interrupting passage of Mark 6:1-32.

The Problem of the Related Miracle Accounts in Mark

There are other miracle stories in Mark that are significantly related to the four miracle accounts under scrutiny in this paper. Rather than hindering the thesis, though, I argue that these other related miracle accounts actually support the presence of an allusion to Psalm 107 in Mark

²⁸France, Mark, 255.

4:35-6:44.

Both R.T. France and Adela Yarbro Collins are persuaded by Paul J. Achtemeier's assertion that there are two parallel units of miracles that originated from two "catenae" in Mark 4:35-8:26.²⁹ The first miracle unit identified by Achtemeier is found in Mark 4:35-6:44, which, of great significance to the current thesis, contains the four miracle accounts examined in this paper. The second miracle unit identified by Achtemeier is found in Mark 6:45-8:26.³⁰ According to Achtemeier, each unit follows the same order: sea miracle (4:34-51; 6:45-51), three healing miracles (5:1-43; 6:53-56; 7:24-37), and a feeding miracle (6:34-44; 8:1-10). Many commentators, following Achtemeier's suggestion of two parallel miracle unit cycles, suggest that Mark has a theological reason for recounting these similar miracle events in this cyclical manner.

In his commentary on Mark, R.T. France argues persuasively that the reason why Mark recounts these two similar miracle units together is to intentionally demonstrate that Jesus' messianic mission is to the Jews first, but it has also been purposefully extended to include the Gentiles.³¹ Whereas the first miracle section is largely set in Galilee (cf. Mk 3:7; 5:1, 21; 6:1, 45), the geographical markers in the second miracle unit indicate that Jesus performed these miracles in Gentile territory (cf. Mk 7:24, 26, 31; 8:10, 11).

In the second miracle unit, Jesus again calms a stormy sea, rescuing a battered crew of disciples from the wind and the waves. This time, Jesus walks on the sea to the disciples' boat as they gaze on in astonishment (Mk 7:45-52; cf. Ps 107:23-32). In the second miracle unit, Jesus again speaks the sick healed, the *Gentile* sick, and all are astonished (Mk 6:53-56; 7:31-37; cf. Ps 107:17-22). Jesus again looses the spiritual bonds of the demon-possessed, this time a child of a

²⁹Paul J. Achtemeier, "Toward the isolation of pre-Markan miracle catenae", *Journal Of Biblical Literature*, 89 (1970), 265-291; France, *Mark*, 220; Collins, *Mark*, 258.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 226.

³¹I am depending heavily on the helpful commentary of R.T. France in this section. France, *Mark*, 294ff.

Gentile woman (Mk 7:24-30; cf. Ps 107:10-16). And in the second miracle unit Jesus again feeds a hungry multitude in the desert until they are satisfied (Mk 8:1-9; cf. Ps 107:4-9). All four redeemed people groups of Psalm 107 appear in this second cycle of miracle accounts: hungry in the desert, the (spiritually) captive dwellers of darkness, the afflicted by sickness and death, and those in boats battered by storm.

If the first miracle unit (Mk 4:35-6:44) of Mark 4:35-8:26 contains an allusion to Psalm 107, and the second miracle unit (Mk 6:45-8:26) parallels the first so neatly, then it follows that Mark may intend the second miracle unit to be read by the light of a Psalm 107 allusion, too. As indicated above, significant verbal and thematic parallels to Psalm 107 occur in the second miracle unit also.

The theological conclusion that might be drawn from these intratextual (Mk 4:35-6:44 cf. Mk 6:45-8:26) and intertextual (Mk 4:35-8:26 cf. Ps 107) relationships is substantial. Mark, by alluding to Psalm 107 in both miracle unit cycles, could be intentionally demonstrating that the promise of the return from exile foretold of in Psalm 107 has been extended to the Gentiles.

Potential Implications

If it has adequately been established that there is indeed an allusion to Psalm 107 in Mark 4:35-6:44 (and in turn Mark 6:45-8:46), then there are several implications that may briefly be explored. In this section, I take up more fully the two allusion criterion that were touched on above, namely Thematic Coherence (4) and Satisfaction (7).

Implications for Reading Psalm 107 in the Surrounding Context

By recognizing an allusion to Psalm 107 in Mark 4:35-6:44 (and in Mark 6:45-8:26), the meaning of Psalm 107, and in turn the overall message of the Psalter, is illumined by the light of the Gospel of Mark. This is first accomplished by shining the illuminating allusion on the ending of Book IV of the Psalter, the section that directly precedes Psalm 107.

Book IV ends with a rehearsal of Israel's history up until the exile in Psalms 104

through 106.³² This section begins with the LORD creating the world (Ps 104) and the LORD's covenant with Abraham (105:8-9) and the subsequent generations (105:10-14). Next, it turns to Israel's oppression in Egypt (105:16-25) and their miraculous rescue by the hand of the LORD, the first Exodus (105:26-38). Following is the LORD's provision for Israel in the wilderness in spite of their disobedience, (105:39-42; 106:6-33). and then comes Israel's conquering of the land, which precipitates further disobedience (105:43-45; 106:34-39). Concluding the redemptive history recap is the exile, which very clearly takes place because of Israel's covenant disobedience (106:40-44). Recognizing the tragic trajectory of Israel's redemptive history up to this point, Erich Zenger says this about these final Book IV psalms, "As the concluding psalms of Psalm Book IV, [Psalms 105 and 106] reflect the catastrophic situation of the exile."³³

These are the concluding verses of Book IV, which are found in Psalm 106:44-48:

Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress,
when he heard their cry.
For their sake he remembered his covenant,
and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.
He caused them to be pitied
by all those who held them captive.

Save us, O Lord our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the Lord!

Book IV ends with the people in exile, crying out to the LORD for salvation and freedom from captivity, longing to be gathered back from the nations.

³²At the end of Book IV we encounter a micro-rehearsal of redemptive history that loosely mirrors the macro-rehearsal of redemptive history present over the entire Psalter.

³³Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger, *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*. (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2000). 187. Erich Zenger refers to Psalms 105 and 106 as twin psalms as he recognizes the similar historical rehearsal in these psalms. Goulder argues that Psalms 105-118 should be read in series, as they all share the theme of return, and thus interpreted together. See Goulder, *The Psalms of Return*, 304.

Whereas praise in anticipation of thanksgiving accompany the prayer for salvation at the end of Book IV, thanksgiving and praise accompany the proclamation of salvation at the beginning of Book V. Psalm 107 opens with a shout of thanksgiving and praise in response to the redemption that the LORD has shown his people. The question is again raised, who are the redeemed? Are these people the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon? Are these people representative of individuals who have been brought back to dwell in the land? Or are these stories to be read as paradigmatic for a future return from exile? The intertextual connection to Mark illuminates the answer to this question.

At least for Mark, Psalm 107 is not ultimately about the LORD bringing Israel back into the promised land. Instead, Psalm 107 is much more significant for Mark. Mark intends to allude to Psalm 107 in his gospel narrative in order to refocus Israel's hope for a return from exile, the return that was foretold of in Deuteronomy 28-30 and Isaiah 40-65, and center this hope solely on the Messiah, who is revealed to be Jesus, and his restoration program. This program is much more expansive than a narrow reading of Psalms 105-107, for this program includes the Gentile nations. For Mark, the redeemed of Psalm 107 are those who have encountered the Messiah, Jesus, who came to the Jew first and then the Gentile.

A narrative structure to the Psalter is still being widely debated and contested. However, if it can be demonstrated that the New Testament authors read the Psalter this way, then a narrative reading of the psalms would have no more critics. By alluding to Psalm 107 in his gospel, Mark invites his readers to interpret the rest of Book V messianically as it points to the final age of the redemptive history of Israel that has dawned with the initiation of the return from exile centered in the person of Jesus. This reading of Psalm 107 is both thematically coherent and satisfying.

Implications for Reading Mark

If Mark consciously intended an allusion to Psalm 107 in his gospel, then there should be both thematic coherence and satisfaction when reading his narrative in light of Psalm 107.

Therefore, several implications arise from the presence of an allusion to Psalm 107 in Mark.

Psalm 107 concludes with these surprising words:

Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things;
let them consider (συνήσουσιν) the steadfast love of the Lord. (107:43)

This is the only place in the Psalter where a sapiential parenetic occurs. This type of exhortation is frequently used following prophetic utterances and enigmatic statements (cf. Jer 9:12; Dan 12:10; Hos 14:9). By placing these words at the end of Psalm 107, the psalmist is marking this psalm out for special attention. Robert Meye suggests that this may explain Jesus' exasperation with his disciples for their lack of understanding συνίετε (Mk 8:17, 21 cf. Mk 4:41; 6:52).³⁴ Had they heeded the psalmist's words in Psalm 107, the disciples might not have wondered, "who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mk 4:41). It would have been obvious that they were dealing with none other than Yahweh the Redeemer.

W. R. Telford, in his book *The Theology of Mark*, identifies three main positions scholars have taken on the significance of Mark's miracle narratives.

The first would hold that the evangelist saw Jesus (as the earlier Jewish-Christian tradition did) as God's eschatological agent, 'the Strong One', the Son of God (=Messiah) whose miracle-working signalled [*sic.*] the rout of Satan and the coming of the Kingdom of God (especially 1:12-13; 1:24; 3:11; 3:22-7). A second would hold that the evangelist saw Jesus (in line with the developing Gentile tradition) as the Son of God, as Gentiles not Jews understood that term, that is, as a divine man whose miracles reveal his supernatural status (especially 4:35-41; 6:45-52; 9:1-8)... One further view is the view that Mark has taken over miracle stories with a divine man Christology, not because he shares this understanding but precisely because he wished to qualify it by setting it alongside a suffering Son of Man Christology... Jesus' true significance is not to be seen as merely that of a miracle-worker (or teacher or prophet) but can only fully be appreciated in light of his crucifixion and resurrection.³⁵

According to Telford, the three options for interpreting Mark's christology in light of his miracle accounts are: 1) Jesus is the Messiah, 2) Jesus is the Son of God (divine), or 3) Jesus is the Crucified Savior. Perhaps the recognition of an allusion to Psalm 107, an allusion Telford

³⁴Meye, "Psalm 107 as 'Horizon'," 9.

³⁵Telford, W.R. *The Theology of Mark*. 101-103.

does not take note of, would show that these three options are not mutually exclusive. By paralleling the miracles of Jesus in Mark 4:35-8:26 to the works of Yahweh in Psalm 107, Mark makes a very strong theological statement about Jesus' divinity, for it is Yahweh who redeems in Psalm 107, and it is Jesus who redeems in the same manner as Yahweh in Mark 4:35-8:26.

Furthermore, by alluding to Psalm 107, Mark is declaring that the return from exile has actually been initiated in the person of Jesus, which is a very Messianic program (cf. Isa 11:1-12; Jer 23:8, 30:3; Hos 3:4-5). For Mark, Jesus is both the Son of God (divine) and the Messiah, ultimately crucified and raised for the redemption of his people. The allusion to Psalm 107 helps to reconcile at least the first two options in forming a Markan christology.

Conclusion

There is more work to be done with Psalm 107 in the other Synoptic Gospels. Both Matthew and Luke preserve the four miracles accounts of Mark 4:35-6:44. The feeding of the five-thousand is recorded in Matthew 14:13-21 and in Luke 9:10-17, the healing of the Gerasene demoniac is recorded in Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39, the healing of Jairus' daughter and the woman with blood is recorded in Matthew 9:18-26 and in Luke 8:40-56, and the calming of the stormy sea is recorded in Matthew 8:23-27 and in Luke 8:22-25. In Luke the adjacency of the four miracle accounts of Mark is preserved (Lk 8:22-56; 9:10-17), whereas in Matthew these miracle accounts are spread out further (Mt 8:23-34; 9:18-26; 14:13-21). Many have noted the connection between Jesus' miracles and Moses in Exodus and Numbers, Elijah and Elisha in 1 and 2 Kings, and those wonders foretold of in Isaiah 40-65, but the recognition of a Psalm 107 allusion could illuminate the message of the Synoptic Gospels further, which would lead to support from other New Testament authors in defense of a narrative structure to the Psalter.

Creative readings of Psalm 107 have been variously employed throughout the centuries. According to James Montgomery Boice, the Pilgrims who came across the Atlantic to settle at Plymouth Rock saw their many dangers, toils, and snares in light of the struggles of the

redeemed in Psalm 107.³⁶ This is intriguing, but this reading ruffles the feathers of the grammatical-historical bird. What has been proposed in this paper is that the *proper* reading of Psalm 107 is found narrowly in light of the allusion that is in place in the Markan miracle stories of Mark 4:35-6:44. Psalm 107 speaks prophetically of a specific redemptive act that was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and his wondrous deeds. The irony of this proposal, though, is that the stories of the redeemed of Psalm 107 actually become the stories of all who have been redeemed by Jesus: those who have come out of spiritual captivity and exile and have crossed the tumultuous waters of judgment and experienced healing from the bread of life. This reading of Psalm 107 is at once the most narrow and most expansive reading possible.

For now, I lay the sickle aside and enjoy the meager but rich harvest grain.

³⁶James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1994), 864.

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